William H. Meadowcroft Papers
Reminiscences by Edison
F. Notebook, N-09-06-28

This document is an Edison notebook from 1909. At the beginning of the book is a memorandum from William H. Meadowcroft to Edison, dated June 28, 1909, indicating that a copy has been made of the handwritten notes in this book. Four brief critiques by Edison of the biography in progress appear on the following page, while subsequent pages narrate incidents in his life. Most of the entries pertain to Edison's work on electric lighting and power and provide an account of his former employee, Sigmund Bergmann. Two memoranda from Edison to Meadowcroft appear on page 22. Notations by archivist Norman R. Speiden can be found on the inside front cover and on page 28. The book contains 32 numbered pages; an erasure on the 33rd page obscures one additional sentence by Edison.

N-09-06-28

Probably out of Black Box, E-347
where Wm. H. Meadowcroft
kept material for Robert Martin
biography of T.H.E.
N.R. Spritzer

38110
Rome Co.,
MFG. STATIONERS,
69 FULTON STREET,
NEW YORK.

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Mr Edison

I have had

copies of notes

made.

Meadowcroft

June 28/09

What was matter with episode about War dept cipher for Genl Thomas when Hood was raiding Jeff & Louisville affair could not be recorded by women this is historical & interesting —

You left out item of finding Morse's Diary in a house rented in Gramercy Park, certainly this is just uninteresting —

My version of the attacking Burton Episode it appears to me is better, but Mum you know it & its actually true —

The J.C. Synod episode left out, also Kahn museum —

New —

Bergmann came to work for me as a boy. He started in our stock quotation printers as he was a rapid worker, and paid no attention to the clock I took a fancy to him & gave him piece work, he ~~worked~~ contributed so many little tools to cheapen the work that he made lots of money. I even helped him get up tools until it occured to me that this was a too rapid method of getting rid of my money as I hadn't the heart to cut the price when it was originally fair. After a year or so Bergmann got enough money to start a small shop in Wooster St New York and it was at this shop that the first phonographs were made. Then came the Carbon Telephone & large majority of which were made by Bergmann for the W.U. Tel Co. finally came the Edison Light & Dynamos were installed in Bergmann's shop to permit him to test the various small apparatus which he was then making — He received power from a few cells around the building — Power cells also supplied from a fifty horse

power engine to other demands in the several offices, soon after the introduction of the big dynamo machine the Jew appeared to Benjamin. shop & insisted that he was using more power than he was paying for & said that lately the belt on his Engine was slipping & quenching Benjamin maintained that he must be mistaken the Jew kept going among his learned & finally discovered the Dynamo, Oh Mr Benjamin now I know where my power goes the pointing to the Dynamo, = Benjamin gave him a withering look of scorn & said Oh you fool Jew come here & I show you – throwing the belt off & disconnecting the wires he spun the armature around by hand. There said B you see it not here that you must look for your loss This so astonished the Jew, & he attached off to his other elevator, The Jew didn't know that that Machine when the wires were connected could stop his Engine,

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B.

Soon after the Business ~~was~~ had grown so large that ~~the~~ Eli Johnson & myself went in as partners & Bergmann, Rented an immense factory building at the Cor of Ave B & 14th St Covering 1/4 of a block & 6 stories high, Here was made all the small things used on the Electric Lighting System such as sockets, Chandeliers, Switches, Meters, Etc. In addition Stock Ticker, Telephone, Telephone Switchboard, Typewriters, (The Hammond typewriter was perfected under me) — over 1500 men were finally employed —

~~Bergmann~~ This shop was very successful both scientifically & financially Bergmann was a man of great Executive ability and carried economy of manufacture to the limit. Among all the men I had associated with ~~Bergmann~~ he had the ~~most~~ Commercial instinct, ~~& I~~ most highly developed —

Soon after this shop was started I sent a man named Vincent down to Santiago Chili to put up a Central Station for Electric Lighting

Stewart after furnishing the Cabin returned to New York with glowing accounts of the Country from order from Madame Cousino the richest woman in Chili for a complete plant with Chandelier for her palace in the outskirts of Santiago. Stewart gave the order to Bergmann & the price was to be for the chandelier alone $4,000. Stewart having no place to go generally managed to stay around Bergmann's place recounting the immense wealth of Madame Cousino and Bergmann kept raising the price of the outfit until Stewart realized that these glowing accounts of wealth was running into money when he kept away & the chandelier went billed for 17000. Cash on Giff of Lading as Bergmann said he was good sure. Stewart's mind [illegible] & he wanted to be sure. At one time he was making an immense swell board

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for the N.Y. Telephone central station

the specifications called for mahogany
one day the president called at the
shop to find out what progress
was being made, after explanations
Bergmann suggested that it was
too bad ~~[illegible]~~ that Mahogany
should be used with such a
beautiful piece of apparatus
when for $1000 extra black walnut
could be substituted. The president
who had been put in his position
by influence ~~[illegible]~~ knowing
nothing of the business readily
assented to this proposition &
Bergmann used the ~~[illegible]~~ walnut
after saving of $1500.

A Jew by the name of Epstein had been
in the habit of buying brass chips
& turnings from the lathes & in some
way Bergmann found out that
he had been cheated ~~[illegible]~~ this
hurt his pride & he determined to
get even. One day the
Jew appeared & said good

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morning Mr Bergmann have you any Chips today. No said B I have none. That is strange Mr B said the Jew want you to look, go he wouldn't look he knew he had none, finally the Jew was so persistent that Bergmann called an assistant & told him to go & see if he had any Chips. He returned & reported that they had the finest & largest lot they ever had. The Jew went up to the general large 66 was piled full of Chips & so heavy that he couldn't lift even one end of a 66. Now Mr B said the Jew how much for the lot Epstein said Bergmann you have cheated me and I will no longer sell by the lot but will only sell by the pound. No amount of argument would change Bergmann's determination to sell by the pound but finally the Jew got up to $250 for the lot B finally opening ~~the~~ as of allegiance of

accepted & made the Jew count out the money & said Well Epstein good bye I've got to go downtown to work at the. The Jew & his associates then attempted to lift the boxes to carry them out but couldn't & then discovered that calculations as to quantity had been thrown out because the boxes had all been screwed to the floor, the Jew made such a scene that he had to be removed by the police. I met the Jew several days afterwards he said he had forgiven Uncle B. he was touchy about his ingenious mind & as the scheme was so ingenious

so a joke

One day I filled 3 or 4 sheets of foolscap with a jumble of figures, & told Benjamin that they were calculations showing the great loss of power from blowing the factory with the Benjamin thought it break & never after would he permit the whistle to blow.

Next door to this factory was a Parochial Catholic School & every time I walked past when the children were out they all saluted with the fingers to the head, on inquiry I found they thought I was a priest,

When I grew up the Laboratory at Menlo Park turned the apparatus to the top floor of the Bergmann Shop at Ave B & 17th St, here I carried on the various experiments required to function perfect city lighting systems, I also devised a system of telegraphy useful for Railways whereby each RR line was made into two independent circuits, no matter how many offices were connected to the line. This was called the phonoplex system & was adopted by over 20 Railways. It had the merit that the added devices needed work on all

Kinds of weather where the regular wires system failed & refused even work when the wires were blown down

I also perfected the a system of telegraphy between stations on trains in motion, whereby messages could be sent from the moving train to the central office. This was later & was the forerunner of wireless telegraphy. This system was used for a number of years on the Lehigh Valley RR on their construction trains. The electric wave passed from a piece of metal on top of the car across the air to the Lehigh wires & then proceeded to the dispatchers office.

In my first experiments with this system I tried it on the Staten Island RR & employed our Opr named

(27)

Wenderoff found the photograph where I was testing first chord for Diamond-hand Earthquake. This photo was made at end of 5 days work without sleep. The longest sleep I ever had some interesting details about this

E

X Wenderoff you can find the press scrapbook a newspaper was sent from a special train to England & sent answer while train going

Kung to do the Experimenting ~~when he got home~~ he reported results. Every day I read newspapers by mail but after some reason He could send messages all right when the train went in one direction but could not make it go in the contrary direction ~~Every Every~~ I made suggestions to Every Kind to get around this phenomena finally I telegraphed King if he had any suggestion of I received a reply that the only way he could suggest to get around the difficulty was to put the Island on pivots ~~[illegible]~~ so it could be turned around — I finally found the trouble & the practical introduction on the Lehigh Valley was the result

This system was sold to a very wealthy man & he never would sell any rights or even answer letters. He finally became a spiritualist, ~~[illegible]~~ the [illegible]

which probably explains it —
At the Laboratory I had a series
of Vacuum pumps worked by
Mercury & used for exhausting Experimental
Incandescent lamps. The main
pipe which was full of Mercury
was about 7½ feet from the
floor along the length of the
pipe were outlets to which the
rubber tubing was connected
Each tube to a pump. One
day while experimenting with
the Mercury pump my assistant
an awkward country boy from
a farm on Staten Island who
had adenoids in his nose &
breathed through his mouth
which was always wide
open was looking up at this
pipe at a small leak of mercury
when a rubber tube came off
and probably two pounds of
mercury went into his mouth
& got out through his system
somehow.

In a short time he became salivated & his teeth got loose — he went home & shortly his mother appeared in the laboratory with a horsewhip which she proposed to use on the proprietor I was fortunately absent & she was mollified somehow by my other assistants — I had given the boy considerable Iodide of potassium to prevent salivation but it did no good in this case

When the first lamp works was started at Menlo Park one of my experiments seemed to show that hot mercury gave a better vacuum in the pumps than cold mercury I therefore started to heat it — soon all the men got salivated & things looked serious but I found that a mirror for looking

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Probably 1889 as that was date of formation of the "Edison General Electric Co."

N.R. Spridgin
8/17/64

where Mercury was used extensively the French Govt made the giving of Salivation of potassium compulsory to prevent salivation. I carried out his idea & made every man take a dose every day. but there was great opposition & hat mercury was finally abandoned.

In ——— Bergmann sold out the rights of a patent he got B4 right of to the Edison General Electric Co & finally he went to Berlin Germany & established an ~~[illegible]~~ Electrical works run on the American plan & with American tool makers. This works is now one of the largest in Germany Employing 10 000 men & pay 18% dividends yearly on a large

Capitalization,
In any trade ~~we~~ any of my boys made with Bergmann he always got the best of us,
One time there was the 62 a convention of the managers of Edison & Kinetoscope Co at Chicago, There was a large lot of representatives from the East and a private car was hired,
At Jersey City a poker game was started by one of the delegates Bergmann was induced to enter the game This was played right through to Chicago without any sleep ~~for~~ The boys lost but swore this I had got back them summer to it Bergmann had ~~[illegible]~~ now all the money when the Porter came in sound Chicago, Bergmann jumped up sound What!! Chicago, I thought it was only Philadelphia -

Bergmann sense of humor was highly developed,

[illegible]